

same post had been offered to Jefferson, but he had refused to serve, preferring to return to the legislature to clear himself of any charges that might be brought against him. He now accepted the appointment for reasons afterward stated in his Memoir. *"I had, two months before that, lost the cherished companion of my life, in whose affections, unabated on both sides, I had lived the last ten years in unchequered happiness. With the public interests the state of my mind concurred in recommending the change of scene proposed."*

Though Jefferson at once set to work to\* put his private affairs in order, the purposes of the mission were so far advanced by the spring of 1783 that there was no necessity for him to sail. The appointment, however, was of the utmost consequence in his life. It presented new interests and lifted him from the gloom into which he had allowed himself to sink.

In June, 1783, he was elected to Congress. He soon resumed the influence and activity of former sessions and acquired a leadership which, in view of the ability of his colleagues, is not to be rated cheaply. He served on every important committee, and was chairman of the committees on the Peace Treaty, on the Treasury, on the Public Debt, and on Commercial Relations with the nations of Europe. He headed his fellow-delegates in the execution of the deed by which Virginia ceded to the general government the entire Territory of the Northwest; and it was with peculiar pleasure that he thus saw consummated a measure due so largely to his own initiation. His plan for the government of this Territory, submitted by him to Congress late in the session, was one of his greatest contributions to our political history. Briefly speaking, it provided for the development, along lines of local self-government, of all acquired territory, and assured the ultimate statehood of each growing community in the West. In his plan no detail was neglected. The names (many of them absurdly fanciful) and boundaries of the States were proposed, and the nature of the temporary government to be established in them; and the conditions of their admission to full statehood were all clearly laid down. Among<sup>1</sup> these conditions by far the most important and far-reaching was